

2021 HARRISON M. SAYRE AWARD HONOREES

Tom Lurie '52 and Nancy Lurie

Longtime supporters of the Columbus community, Tom and Nancy Lurie have given their time, talent, and treasure to organizations supporting the arts, health, social services, women's issues, and the Jewish faith.

They have long served on boards and committees with local nonprofits, including the Columbus Cancer Clinic, Temple Israel, Directions for Youth and Family, and the Columbus Museum of Art. Nancy was a long-time volunteer tutor at Columbus City Schools, and Tom has served in board roles with leading national institutions serving the decorative arts world.

The Columbus Foundation is proud to honor Tom and Nancy Lurie with the 2021 Harrison M. Sayre Award in recognition of their deep and abiding commitment to community service. Their thoughtful generosity, leadership, innovation, compassion, and service in our community have touched countless lives, paving the way for the next generation of philanthropists and community leaders.

<https://columbusfoundation.org/stories-of-impact/2021-harrison-m-sayre-award-honorees>

One of the Country's First Racially Integrated Fine Art Shows Gets an Overdue Update

A new exhibit in Houston's Fifth Ward is an homage to—and a critique of—1971's "The De Luxe Show."

By **Leah Binkovitz '07**

September 15, 2021

In late summer 1971, one of the most significant art events in U.S. history took place inside a beloved but defunct movie theater in the heart of Fifth Ward, a historically Black Houston neighborhood. "The De Luxe Show," which took its name from the iconic DeLuxe Theater that still stands today, is credited as one of the first racially integrated art shows in the country. It brought together works from leading abstract artists such as Sam Gilliam and Ed Clark and prompted a renovation of the theater, creating a gallery space that would live on as the Black Arts Gallery for a few years before it sat vacant for decades.

Today, the space is an art destination once more, hosting a small but dynamic exhibition, "Art for the People: Celebrating 50 Years of the DeLuxe Show and the 5th Ward Community," which runs through September 30. Shows celebrating the anniversary are also on display in Los Angeles and New York. But "Art for the People" considers the legacy of "The De Luxe Show" from a point of view that has largely been unconsidered: Fifth Ward's.

The new show, curated by Project Row Houses' curator and art director Danielle Burns Wilson and organized by Harrison Guy, director of arts and culture at Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation, is both an homage to and a critique of the original exhibition,

which brought together Houston art patrons Dominique and John de Menil, New York artist Peter Bradley, and local leaders such as a young Mickey Leland, who would later serve as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

The 1971 exhibition was a high-concept show, meant to challenge what art historian Darby English called a “crisis of artistic freedom” confronting Black modernists, who, English argued, had to contend with efforts to banish them “from the cultural landscape” in favor of a narrower, almost hegemonic definition of Black art. The idea for it emerged out of several simultaneous conversations in the art world about Black representation. Earlier that year, in New York, the Whitney Museum’s exhibition “Contemporary Black Artists in America” opened to boycotts from Black artists accusing the Whitney of not having consulted with Black art specialists and of downplaying the show, which led to the withdrawal of fifteen artists, including Gilliam. In Houston, the de Menil-backed Institute for the Arts at Rice University had just put on a controversial show organized by the white artist Larry Rivers with images focusing on slavery and Black pain.

With Bradley at the helm and Gilliam, Leland, and others assisting, “The De Luxe Show” would instead be in the hands of Black artists and organizers. And it would send its message through abstract work from artists of varying races. Abstraction, English argues in his book *1971: A Year in the Life of Color*, allowed the show to “reexamine a defining problem of American life—color and color relations—in an exhilaratingly open-ended way.” Bradley was particularly convinced of the power of abstraction to challenge what he saw as the dominating dictates of representational art for Black artists at the time. In an interview with Steve Cannon, he insisted that his criteria were simple: “I looked for anyone who was painting and making good, hard abstraction.”

The show welcomed thousands of visitors, including children bused there because Bradley believed they would be the most receptive to the work. Photographs from the Menil archives capture community members gathered outside the theater and peering at the work inside. Reflecting on the exhibition, famed Houston curator Alvia Wardlaw wrote in *Art and Activism: Projects of John and Dominique de Menil* that the “show galvanized the Fifth Ward community and created a rare interface between blacks and whites, one that was productive and goal driven.”

But for all the ways it challenged the art world, the exhibition came with challenges of its own, including the way it viewed both Houston and Fifth Ward. “It would be a gas,” literary agent Ronald Hobbs wrote to the de Menils in July 1971, after the Institute for the Arts show, “if in a prominent black community intersection, one could come upon a symbol of pride, dignity, and high artistic achievement, realized through the skill of local black talent.” That would not have been hard to find. At that point, John Biggers was still more than a decade from retirement from the art department that he helped build at Texas Southern University, the historically Black university in Houston. “I can’t put the emphasis, how important [Biggers’s art department] was—thousands of young impressionable minds to come to a cultural center and learn something about themselves that they hadn’t seen in any other way, form, or fashion,”

says Houston artist Bert Samples, whose intricate mural Malcolm Marco Malcolm Marco is a permanent installation inside the DeLuxe but is included as part of the anniversary show.

But John de Menil would later reply to Hobbs, “A show by local black artists would have been a pacifier because they are from mediocre to bad.” He also defended going around local Black leaders such as civil rights activist Earl Allen, adding that the artists in the show “would not have wanted to come under the local black art establishment,” because, as he wrote, “[t]hey wanted direct access to the street.”

Indeed, “the street” became a critical part of how the show has been framed over the years. Critic Eleanor Freed, for example, wrote in the Houston Post that Fifth Ward was “better known for urban decay than for aesthetics.” In his letters to potential artists for inclusion, Bradley wrote that the show’s intent was “to bring first-rate art to people who don’t usually attend shows.” When they renovated the inside of the DeLuxe Theater with help from Black contractor Sawyer Bynam, they left the run-down exterior alone, playing up the image of decay. All of this contributed to the show being viewed by some as, in Freed’s language, an “experiment.”

For many Fifth Ward residents, then and now, that image is incomplete. “Those people that had that point of view, like the ones that established that exhibition, did not recognize the creativity that existed within Fifth Ward,” says artist and longtime Fifth Ward resident Jesse Lott, who was recently named a 2022 Texas State Artist and has contributed some of his work to the “Art for the People” exhibit. The 78-year-old remembers the original show’s high-handed concept presenting itself as taking “the real deal down to the ghetto so we can show people what it’s about.”

Lott’s studio is just down the road from the DeLuxe, and he remembers the constant ingenuity he witnessed in his neighborhood growing up. “[W]hen you needed something you had to go ahead and make something,” he said, “pulling it out of thin air ... transforming one function for another function.” He also remembers the zydeco on Sundays in church parking lots, reflecting the area’s Creole roots and musical legacy. For Lott, the 1971 show’s focus on the debate over abstraction and representation is ultimately unproductive. “You stand in front of a blank canvas and you put your first piece of color on it, that’s as abstract as you can get,” regardless of how it ends up, he says.

After Bradley’s show closed, the space became the Black Arts Center’s Black Arts Gallery and, thanks to funding from the de Menils, staged several more shows. The relationship, as Wardlaw notes in her essay, was not without its complications. Black arts leaders wanted more control over curatorial decisions and the de Menils saw their financial involvement as being “catalytic rather than perpetually sustaining.” It wasn’t long after the de Menils ended the lease in January 1976 that the gallery closed, according to Wardlaw. For decades, the theater sat unused, until the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation purchased it in 1998 and began its years-long redevelopment project. “Art for the People” is the first art exhibition held in the space since its 2015 reopening, according to Guy, the redevelopment corporation’s arts and culture director.

The current show sidesteps some of the original's preoccupations and instead tries to draw attention to the neighborhood's own cultural legacy with works from significant artists with ties to Fifth Ward. "The artwork is really about reviving the space," says curator Burns Wilson, "seeing the art as possibilities." Two geometric sculptures by George Smith are classic examples of his work inspired by the Dogon peoples of West Africa, and they seem to produce their own gravity. On the other side of the room, Lott's sculpture of a woman with arms raised as if she's climbing through the air has its own expressive spirituality and urgency. And Mel Chin's Wheel of Death uses shreds of tires on wood formed into a boar, snake, and rooster to represent ignorance, avarice, and lust from the Buddhist wheel of life. But just as significant, perhaps more so, are photographs from the Menil archives of Fifth Ward residents attending the 1971 show, which are displayed on large canvases around the gallery. The prominence of the photos recasts their subjects from "experiment" subjects to neighbors. No longer framed through the optics of the original show's spectacle, the images transform into something like family photos on the walls of the DeLuxe, inviting more personal connections.

"What I'm hoping is that we'll have an annual DeLuxe show," says Guy, "give [the original show] homage but also flip it on its head." Though the current exhibition is up for just a few weeks, those involved hope it represents the start of something substantial and ongoing, building off the Texas Commission on the Arts' 2020 designation of Fifth Ward as an official cultural district. Guy says he sees this exhibition in conversation with the original show. "I really love that it will be a continuum," he adds. "The way that this is different," he continues, "is not only did we turn the lens back on the people and made them the art, we're really celebrating Fifth Ward artists as well."

<https://www.texasmonthly.com/arts-entertainment/deluxe-show-houston-fifth-ward-art/>

Vanessa Barboni Hallik on Treating Clothing as an Asset
SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2021 | 42:46 | E119

At a Distance

A podcast about the bigger picture. The Slowdown's co-founders, Spencer Bailey and Andrew Zuckerman, call leading minds to get a whole-earth, long-view perspective.

EPISODE SUMMARY

Vanessa Barboni Hallik '99, founder and CEO of the fashion brand Another Tomorrow, speaks with us about building supply chains from scratch, how clothing resale marks a radical shift in how people think about fashion, and why the pandemic provides an opportunity to redefine luxury in terms of personal and planetary values.

SHOW CONTRIBUTORS

Vanessa Barboni Hallik
Spencer Bailey

Andrew Zuckerman
The Slowdown

<https://at-a-distance.simplecast.com/episodes/vanessa-barboni-hallik-on-treating-clothing-as-an-asset>

Why Crypto Is Actually Good for Tracking Money Laundering
SEP 14, 2021

Hummingbird Co-CEO **Matt Van Buskirk '03** discusses why #crypto is actually good for tracking money laundering.

<https://www.nasdaq.com/videos/why-crypto-is-actually-good-for-tracking-money-laundering>

‘Basically profitable since day 1’: Saatva co-founder **Ricky Joshi '97** on tackling the luxury mattress market

By Cale Guthrie Weissman

SEPTEMBER 23, 2021

Modern Retail

Over the last year and a half, people have increasingly invested in their homes. And mattress brand Saatva was able to capitalize that demand.

The ten-year-old company saw revenues almost double over the last two years. In 2017, the company disclosed that it made \$207 million in revenue. According to co-founder and chief strategy officer Ricky Joshi, Saatva has been “basically profitable since day one.” He joined the Modern Retail Podcast and spoke about how Saatva has been growing and expanding its product line.

Saatva has tried to establish itself as the producer of a higher-end mattress made with more sustainable materials. According to Joshi, the intention since day one wasn’t to raise a lot of money and, as a result, be forced to scale in a short amount of time. “We really went out there and just tried to organically build the best business possible, being really disciplined in terms of how we managed our spending,” he said. The company hasn’t raised any VC money, but did receive a private equity investment in 2018 for an undisclosed amount.

In the early days, the focus was on making a few products — namely mattresses — well, as well as capitalizing on the then-nascent digital marketing landscape. Now, the company is beefing up its advertising efforts and has expanded to other products, including bed frames, sheets and comforters. Joshi said more products are on the horizon too.

With that, Saatva has also been increasingly expanding its retail footprint. It has a New York showroom that currently brings in \$8 million of revenue a year. Now, the brand is opening new locations in cities like San Francisco, Washington, DC, Portland and Boston. Joshi said that the New York location “significantly exceeded our expectations.”

With the new stores, Joshi said he’s trying to figure out the right goals. For smaller cities, for example, direct sales in stores will be more important than those with larger populations where a store can have greater impact on the overall market. “Every story has its own KPIs and goals,” he said.

The next year is critical for Saatva’s growth, in Joshi’s eyes. The company is ready to open more stores, launch new products and gin up more brand awareness. “We’re going to take advantage of the growth in the home furnishing sector,” he said. “Particularly the luxury part of the home furnishing sector.”

Here are a few highlights from the conversation, which have been lightly edited for clarity.

On owning the entire purchase experience

“One thing very different about us, versus a lot of other DTC companies, is we’re not dropship. We actually created a national infrastructure, producing out of 18 factories in 160 distribution centers — managed all by internally run software. So we’re able to actually deliver our mattresses at home and remove the product as well, which has been a big differentiator for our business as the mattress online category has blossomed. That has also allowed us to really not be limited in terms of the product we’re bringing to market.”

A focus in search ads

“[Over the years] we were really driven by Google ads, Bing ads. We’re doing a lot of direct response type marketing — a little bit of social but a lot less dependent [on] social. Back then, believe it or not, the keywords in our category were about a quarter of what they are now in terms of overall price. So being an early player enabled [us] to grab keywords when they were a lot cheaper than they are now. [That] turned out to be a strong fuel for us in the beginning. But we were also doing a bunch of other things, too. [For example], podcasts we were early on... [and we] had a print campaign to the New York Times for years — things like that. But really the driver was direct response marketing, mostly search engine marketing.”

Capitalizing on the e-commerce boom

“We’ve been very very tactical with our marketing. And we’ve been performance marketers from day one. As a result, the business grew north of 50% in 2020 and still is growing substantially. We just came out of our best month in history — revenues have almost doubled in the last two years. And we continue to see that growth. I think one thing that’s happened is, even with the pandemic and even when people started going back to stores maybe more than they used to, there’s still a substantial percentage of consumers who had gotten very comfortable purchasing online. And I think we’ve been very well equipped to serve customers. And that broader shift is something that’s that seems to be sticking. “

https://www.modernretail.co/retailers/basically-profitable-since-day-1-saatva-co-founder-ricky-joshi-on-tackling-the-luxury-mattress-market/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=glossydis&utm_source=daily&utm_content=210923

Alumni Awards

The Moritz College of Law presents annual alumni awards in the areas of distinguished alumna/us, outstanding recent alumna/us, judicial excellence, community service, and public service. Nominations are accepted from fellow alumni and the legal community. Award nomination deadlines are in late winter and awards are presented in the fall.

In addition to awards given by the college of law, The Ohio State University also has several alumni awards that are presented to law alumni. These include professional achievement awards, service awards, early career achievement awards, and citizenship awards.

The George V. Voinovich Humanitarian Award

Michael Corey ('01 CA) '12

This award is given annually to an alum or friend of the college who has devoted significant time and energy to causes and projects that benefit the greater community and the welfare of humanity.

Michael is the Executive Director of the Human Service Chamber of Franklin County, a nonprofit chamber of commerce serving over 120 agencies in the Columbus Region. The organization advocates with and for its nonprofit members on a range of public policy issues such as food access, affordable housing, immigration, workforce development, and education. HSC also provides shared professional services to its members, such as access to legal counsel and communications services--as well as access to PPE in these Covid times. The Chamber was named one of the 5 Nonprofits to Watch in 2019 by The Columbus Foundation and received The Columbus Foundation Award in 2020.

Michael graduated from Moritz in 2012 as Executive Editor of the Ohio State Law Journal. After practicing healthcare law at Bricker & Eckler in Columbus for three years, Michael worked as a policy analyst at the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, and in voter protection during the 2016 presidential campaign. Michael was named to Columbus Business First's 40 Under 40 Class of 2018 and was among the same publication's 2019 Power 100. He was also among the inaugural class of Columbus CEO's Future 50 in 2019, was a Finalist for that publication's Small Nonprofit CEO of the Year in 2020 and is a member of Columbus' 2020-21 Young American Leaders Program.

Michael holds a BA from Duke University and a Master's in Education Policy from Ohio State. He recently joined the College's National Council and its Time and Change campaign committee. In 2018, Michael, his wife Lori, and his mother Georgeann created The George N. Corey Family Scholarship in honor of Michael's late father. Michael was a scholarship recipient himself and understands the immense difference such a gift can make in a law student's future.

https://moritzlaw.osu.edu/alumni/alumni-awards?fbclid=IwAR3lWiGLe052HKnFPAHW6BT8iYsnYDoDbmtuW4LX2QkBC-DpuUA6Sb4FY_c

Committee on Reviewing the Public Health Emergency Medical Countermeasures Enterprise (PHEMCE)

The HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response has charged an ad hoc committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine with conducting a study to evaluate existing Public Health Emergency Medical Countermeasure Enterprise (PHEMCE) policy and practices and make recommendations for a re-envisioned PHEMCE.

Description

An ad hoc committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine will conduct a study to evaluate existing Public Health Emergency Medical Countermeasure Enterprise's (PHEMCE) policy and practices and make recommendations for a re-envisioned PHEMCE, particularly after COVID-19. This review will provide high-level strategic guidance to the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) on emerging issues, research, and activities relevant to the PHEMCE programs, goal, and activities.

The committee shall:

Review the effectiveness of existing PHEMCE activities and areas for improvement by assessing available charters, memorandums of understanding (MOUs), process documents, and public documents, e.g., (PHEMCE Strategy and Implementation Plan) and engaging with PHEMCE personnel in a series of interviews to garner understanding of historic practices.

Provide recommendations on business practices to best incorporate industrial base, supply chain, and stockpiling strategies toward Medical Countermeasure (MCM) preparedness.

Provide recommendations on business practices to ensure defensible recommendations, conduct enterprise-wide review of programs and priorities and harmonization across agencies.

Provide recommendations on the integration of partners in PHEMCE decision making and activity execution.

A report with the committee's findings and recommendations will be developed.

Committee

MEMBER

Patricia Zettler '98

Patricia Zettler is an associate professor at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law and a member of Ohio State's Drug Enforcement and Policy Center and its Comprehensive Cancer Center. She writes and teaches about FDA law and policy, torts, and legislation and regulation. Her scholarship has appeared in leading legal and health sciences journals such as the *Indiana Law Journal*, the *Boston College Law Review*, *JAMA*, *JAMA Oncology*, and *Science*, and has covered various topics including the regulation of COVID-19 countermeasures. She currently serves on the Presidential Task Force on the Use of Unproven and/or Unethical Cell & Gene Therapies for the International Society of Cell & Gene Therapy and the Black Lives Matter Advisory Committee for the Food and Drug Law Institute. In past years, she has served as a member of the editorial advisory board for the *Food and Drug Law Journal* (2015-2020), a member of the Task Force to Revise Guidelines for the International Society for Stem Cell Research (2019-2021), and a Consultant to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Committee on Pain Management and Regulatory Strategies to Address Prescription Opioid Abuse (2016-2017), among other things. Before entering academics, Zettler served as an associate chief counsel in the Office of the Chief Counsel at FDA. She received her undergraduate and law degrees from Stanford University, both with distinction. She currently serves as an expert witness retained by certain plaintiffs in *In re Suboxone Antitrust Litigation* and *In re Opana Antitrust Litigation*.

Committee Membership Roster Comments

Please note that there has been a change in the committee membership with the appointment of Dr. Patricia (Tia) Powell, effective 08/09/2021.

Disclosure of Unavoidable Conflicts of Interest

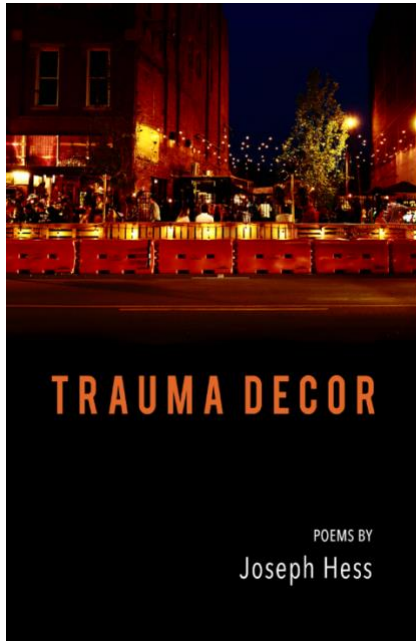
The conflict of interest policy of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (<http://www.nationalacademies.org/coi>) prohibits the appointment of an individual to a committee authoring a Consensus Study Report if the individual has a conflict of interest that is relevant to the task to be performed. An exception to this prohibition is permitted if the National Academies determines that the conflict is unavoidable and the conflict is publicly disclosed. A determination of a conflict of interest for an individual is not an assessment of that individual's actual behavior or character or ability to act objectively despite the conflicting interest.

Kent Kester has a conflict of interest in relation to his service on the Committee on Reviewing the Public Health Emergency Medical Countermeasures Enterprise (PHEMCE) because he is employed by Sanofi Pasteur. The National Academies has concluded that for this committee to accomplish the tasks for which it was established, its membership must include at least one person who has relevant and recent industry experience in medical countermeasures research and development and medical supply chains. Dr. Kester has current experience in medical countermeasure research and development as Vice President and Head of Translational Sciences and Biomarkers at Sanofi Pasteur. Dr. Kester's industry experience is combined with his extensive experience in the organizational and operational aspects of PHEMCE in the interagency environment at the US Department of Defense, including developing policies relating to clinical and research aspects of infectious diseases and clinical vaccine development

at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. The National Academies has determined that the experience and expertise of Dr. Kester is needed for the committee to accomplish the task for which it has been established. The National Academies could not find another available individual with the equivalent experience and expertise who does not have a conflict of interest. Therefore, the National Academies has concluded that the conflict is unavoidable. The National Academies believes that Dr. Kester can serve effectively as a member of the committee, and the committee can produce an objective report, taking into account the composition of the committee, the work to be performed, and the procedures to be followed in completing the study.

Robin Robinson has a conflict of interest in relation to his service on the Committee on Reviewing the Public Health Emergency Medical Countermeasures Enterprise (PHEMCE) because he is employed by RenovaCare, Inc. The National Academies has concluded that for this committee to accomplish the tasks for which it was established, its membership must include at least one person who has substantial relevant experience in the operational aspects of PHEMCE from the standpoint of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), as well as relevant expertise and recent experience in medical countermeasure research and development; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) defense. Dr. Robinson served as Director of BARDA (2008-2016), leading the agency in the development and acquisition of medical countermeasures, and as BARDA's Influenza and Emerging Disease program director (2004-2008) where he gained valuable expertise and perspective on the development of vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics, and medical devices to address CBRN threats. While serving as Director of BARDA, Dr. Robinson was also the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. Dr. Robinson has extensive current experience in research and development as Chief Scientific Officer for RenovaCare, Inc. In addition, from 1995-2004, Dr. Robinson served as Director of Vaccines at Novavax, Inc., leading vaccine development, clinical trials, manufacturing, and licensing. The National Academies has determined that the experience and expertise of Dr. Robinson is needed for the committee to accomplish the task for which it has been established. The National Academies could not find another available individual with the equivalent experience and expertise who does not have a conflict of interest. Therefore, the National Academies has concluded that the conflict is unavoidable. The National Academies believes that Dr. Robinson can serve effectively as a member of the committee, and the committee can produce an objective report, taking into account the composition of the committee, the work to be performed, and the procedures to be followed in completing the study.

<https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/committee-on-reviewing-the-public-health-emergency-medical-countermeasures-enterprise-phemce#sectionCommittee>



Trauma Décor by **Joseph Hess '83**

“Joseph Hess’s Trauma Décor deftly melds the loss of innocence within the larger, ravaged landscapes of American culture and pastoral. From the remembrance of “evening balanced / on bike pedals,” the poet veers past Lazy Boys, Formica counters, and Flying J gas stops to solemnly remind us: “there are no green / zones to haunt, just America’s solemn décor.”

—Mark Irwin, author of *Shimmer*, Philip Levine Prize for Poetry

In a world stippled with B-movie spaceships and the mundane horror of late 20th century suburbia, Joseph Hess captures the pervasive sex and violence, but also the exhaustion, heartache, and isolation, of late-stage capitalism. Smart and piercing, Trauma Décor takes us through Natural History dioramas of easy chairs staged against the news hour hum of

“Vietnam casualties,” of A-bombs and David Bowie, of Godzilla and Rita Hayworth, our speaker all the while aching for intimacy in an era of marked estrangement and the precariousness of large-scale denial. “God gave me one / gland for sex and war, / and I’ve crossed and re-crossed / all their intersections,” writes Hess, and we feel each inquiry he makes deep in our gut. Trauma Décor shows us a low-key and slow-stalking Midwestern apocalypse, suitably attired in all the trappings of abundance, yet, “privately / we know we’re not who we should be.”

—Cait Weiss Orcutt, author of *VALLEYSPEAK* (Zone 3, 2017)

<https://www.finishinglinepress.com/product/trauma-decor-by-joseph-hess/>

Artie Isaac '78 was quoted in the September 2021 issue of ColumbusCEO in an article titled "How to identify the next CEO: The culture quotient"

Succession Planning

How to identify the next CEO: The culture quotient

Choosing the next company leader is all about making sure the person brings something truly new to the organization's culture, experts say. Because same-old equals stagnation.

By LAURA NEWPUP

Audra Christie is a human resources executive and certified executive coach who began her career as a financial analyst at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. She later took on leadership positions across multiple industries, including working at the world's largest company, Walmart.

That opportunity led Christie and her family to Arkansas so she could lead human resources in merchandising and international divisions. It was a dramatic shift in

scenery, which meant trading the bright lights of Times Square for the five-and-dime feel of Bentonville City Square. Christie was given a nine-month onboarding opportunity, and on day three she was assigned a "culture coach."

She says the biggest gift she received from the retailer came in the form of several leaders across North America who "told the value of a culture coach."

"It's hard to transition into the world's largest company if you don't have a culture go-to leader to ask the awkward questions you have when you are new," Christie says. "The culture coach translates what's being said and, just as importantly, what's not being said. During this onboarding period, I was deliberately educated on the history and evolution of the culture and knowing the moments when I could comfortably fit in and stand out. My coach also opened up his network to me to build relationships quicker and assemble a way to create a level of confidence for someone new."

"Most corporate cultures aren't staying the same these days. When you are hiring a CEO, you want that person to be a culture-add based on their experience, expertise and what they can bring as a dynamic leader."

AUDRA CHRISTIE, coach and founder, Midwest Change Coaching

Courtesy AN ALEXANDER PHOTOGRAPHY

Audra Christie

Through her company, Midwest Change Coaching, Christie now specializes in helping newly appointed leaders transition into their first C-level position and claim their executive presence. As companies evaluate their succession planning strategies following a turbulent year filled with the stress of a pandemic, remote work, racial injustices, protests and a contentious presidential election, Christie says a focus on culture is more important than ever.

"Most corporate cultures aren't staying the same these days," Christie says. "When you are hiring a CEO, you want that person to be a culture-add based on their experience, expertise and what they can bring as a dynamic leader. That doesn't build upon a culture, so it doesn't stay stagnant. That helps lead the organization forward."

Pandemic impact

The unexpected nature of COVID-19 has put a spotlight on the importance of succession planning so the ready to navigate times of crisis. The pandemic has had five important effects, according to the Center for Executive Succession at the Darden Moore School of Business, University of South Carolina. It has:

- Focused corporate boards on the criticality of talent management.
- Taken off succession blinders.
- Shown a need to develop talent to capabilities and not profiles.
- Shown a need to expand how companies interact with candidates.
- Revealed that board meetings can be done virtually and at a fraction of the cost of in-person gatherings.

Eric Douglas Keene, an Ohio native who runs Keene Advisory Group and is managing director of board and CEO Services at New York-based MSR Partners, says he has had to re-evaluate his search for candidates in the remote talent pipeline.

"That's because a booming stock market has given some leaders the flexibility to step away from corporations to pursue other interests. The pandemic has prompted people to search for work they consider

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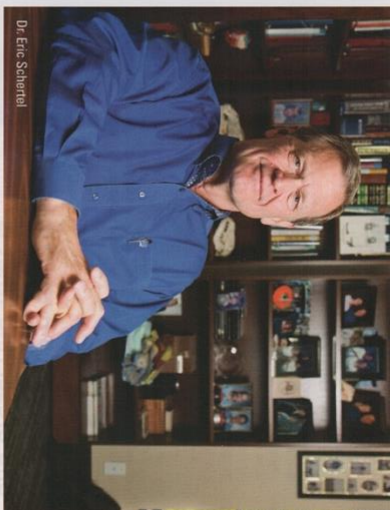
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Dr. Eric Scherrel

more fulfilling. And the social justice movement has moved some leaders to direct their energy toward causes that can help minority communities.

Keene, an advocate for increasing the diversity of boards and C-suits, recommends boards expand their definition of what "qualified" means as they cultivate talent pipelines, internally and externally.

"Instead of emphasizing prestige or popular companies worked for, understand the demonstrated accomplishments of a candidate and the situation in which they occurred," he says. "During a succession process, leaders can be identified early, especially within the organization, and their capabilities can be developed over time."

Keene also is having more conversations with boards and corporate leaders about the importance of moral quotient, emotional intelligence, empathy and desire for leaders who can influence a team through humility, grace, transparent communication and compassion.

Artie Isaac has chaired CEO peer groups with Vestage Worldwide since 2011. He, too, says the pandemic may cause some companies to focus more on finding leaders who demonstrate emotional intelligence and a passion for developing relationships.

While those skills always have

been important, the health crisis and a dramatic shift in how people work – including increased expectations around child and family care – have made them even more sought after.

"I think you'll see executive competence and executive humility," Isaac says. "I don't believe any of us in the workplace, in the community or in families are going to get away with arrogance skills are going to get a lot more attention and be embraced by those who power through."

Sharing a cultural vision

Dr. Eric Scherrel joined MedVet in 1999 as a veterinary surgeon and partner and in subsequent years took on the role of president, chief medical officer and head of surgery.

He became CEO in 2010. He thinks it would be a mistake for CEOs not to prioritize identifying a successor, not just because they will retire one day, but because unexpected events like a death or illness could occur.

Knowing there would come a day where he would want to spend more time with his family, Scherrel began the succession process by promoting Dr. Linda Lehmkahl to chief medical officer in 2015. She became CEO in 2019.

Lehmkahl joined the veterinary practice about a year after Scherrel

In Memory

Ralph N. Khourie '45, age 95, loving husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather passed away peacefully on September 27, 2021 surrounded by his family. Ralph was born in Columbus on September 10, 1926 to Najib and Malvina Khourie. He was a graduate of the Columbus Academy and attended The Ohio State University. Ralph took over the family business, Khourie's, which later became known as The Collection, a well known ladies' clothing store with three locations in the Columbus area. He was a devout Catholic with a very deep, quiet, and abiding faith, and he passed that faith on to his children. Ralph is survived by his loving wife of 36 years, Patricia (Boruch) Khourie, daughters Diane (Rich) Prettyman, Martha (Ron) Verhoff, Marci (Les) Maynard, Lisa French, Mary (Dave) Berg, and Michelle Khourie. Also surviving are his mother-in-law, Edna Vitikas, sister-in-law, Joan (Tom) Ferritto, grandchildren Matt (Sonya) Turnipseede, Jennifer (Dave) Simmons, Geoff (Dorinda) Verhoff, Kristin (Vince) Tassi, Andrew (Jessica) Maynard, Melissa Berg, and David (Anne) Berg. He leaves behind 12 precious great-grandchildren, Carina and Nick Turnipseede, Nathan and Alexa Simmons, Jackson and William Verhoff, Jacob and Dominic Tassi, Gabriel, Josephine, and Augustine Maynard, and Lukas Berg. He is also survived by several nieces, nephews, cousins, and a host of treasured friends. Ralph was preceded in death by two beloved daughters Catherine Lee and Ellen Sue Khourie, two brothers Michael and William Khourie, son-in-law, Larry French and granddaughter Lisa Turnipseede. Love for his family was followed by fondness for a great cigar, a big lobster, endless gin rummy games, cheering for the Cincinnati Reds, and recounting old family stories. Ralph was a longtime member of the Athletic Club of Columbus. He enjoyed traveling and his most memorable trip was to the Holy Land. He will be greatly missed. The family will receive friends Sunday, October 3, from 2-5 p.m. at EGAN-RYAN FUNERAL HOME NORTHWEST CHAPEL, 4661 Kenny Rd., Columbus, OH 43220. Mass of Christian Burial will be held at St. Joseph Cathedral, 212 East Broad St., Columbus, OH 43215 on Monday, October 4, 2021 at 10:00 AM. Internment Resurrection Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Down Syndrome Association of Central OH (DSACO), 510 East North Broadway, Columbus, OH 43214.